

5.1 Introduction to Health Psychology

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 20 marks**

KEY WORDS general adaptation syndrome 一般适应综合征 • stress 压力 • stressor 应激源
• emotion-focused 情绪聚焦 • resistance 抵抗期

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **stress** 压力 and health.

You must be able to:

- distinguish a **stressor** 应激源 from the **stress response** 应激反应
- describe the phases of the **general adaptation syndrome** 一般适应综合征
- contrast **problem-focused** 问题聚焦 and **emotion-focused** 情绪聚焦 coping
- state how **social support** 社会支持 and **perceived control** 控制感 affect health

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Stressor and response

A **stressor** is the event; the **stress response** is the body's reaction to it. The same event is not equally stressful to everyone, because appraisal intervenes between the two.

■ General adaptation syndrome

Alarm: arousal mobilises resources. **Resistance:** arousal is sustained. **Exhaustion:** resources deplete and vulnerability to illness rises. The health cost comes from prolonged resistance, not from brief alarm.

■ Two coping strategies

Problem-focused coping changes the stressor, and works best where the situation is controllable. **Emotion-focused** coping manages the reaction, and is more appropriate where it is not.

■ Support and control

Strong social support and a sense of control over events are both associated with better health outcomes. Both reduce the appraisal of threat, which is where the physiological response begins.

2 Practice

2.1 State the difference between a stressor and the stress response. [2]

2.2 Name the three phases of the general adaptation syndrome. [3]

2.3 A person cannot change a situation but reframes how they think about it.

(a) Name the coping strategy. [1]

(b) State when it is the better choice. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 The health damage from chronic stress arises mainly in [1]

- **A** the alarm phase
- **B** prolonged resistance and exhaustion
- **C** a single stressful event
- **D** emotion-focused coping

3.2 Problem-focused coping is most effective when the stressor is [1]

- **A** uncontrollable
- **B** controllable
- **C** imaginary
- **D** brief

3.3 Two employees face the same workload; one reports far more stress.

(a) State what explains the difference. [1]

(b) Explain one workplace change that could reduce it. [2]

3.4 Applied research task. Adults kept a diary of daily stressors and had blood samples taken monthly for a year. Those reporting many small daily hassles showed more illness than those reporting one major life event. A second finding: people who described their workload as “a challenge” showed lower stress hormones than those who described the same workload as “a threat”.

(a) Name the three stages of Selye’s general adaptation syndrome, and state what happens in each. [3]

(b) Explain how the second finding shows that stress depends on appraisal as well as on the stressor. [2]

(c) Distinguish problem-focused from emotion-focused coping, and state which is more useful for a stressor that cannot be changed. [2]

(d) Explain **one** limitation of using self-reported diaries as the measure of stress. [1]

Solutions

2.1 the stressor is the event; the stress response is the body’s reaction to it, mediated by appraisal.

2.2 alarm; resistance; exhaustion.

2.3 (a) emotion-focused coping. (b) when the situation cannot be changed.

3.1 B. prolonged arousal and resource depletion produce the health cost.

3.2 B. changing the stressor requires that it be changeable.

3.3 (a) differences in appraisal, social support or perceived control. (b) give employees more control over how and when work is done, since perceived control lowers threat appraisal and therefore the physiological response.

3.4 (a) **Alarm** — the stressor is perceived, adrenaline is released and the body mobilises resources (1). **Resistance** — the body stays aroused and copes, with hormone levels remaining high (1). **Exhaustion** — resources are depleted, resistance to illness falls and physical damage appears (1).

(b) The workload was the same in both groups, so the difference in hormone levels cannot come from the stressor itself (1); it comes from how it was **appraised** — as a challenge to be met or as a threat of harm — which shows that stress is the product of the event and the person’s interpretation of it (1).

(c) **Problem-focused** coping acts on the stressor itself, for example by making a plan or removing the demand (1). **Emotion-focused** coping manages the feelings the stressor produces, for example by reframing it or seeking support; it is the more useful of the two when the stressor **cannot** be changed (1).

(d) Diaries depend on memory and honesty, and people high in negative affect may report both more hassles and more symptoms, so the correlation could reflect a reporting style rather than a real effect on health (1).